

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #2544/01 2902239
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 172239Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5490
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6087
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2097
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 0155
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1062
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 1303
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS QUITO 002544

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS ALSO TO USOAS AND USAID/LAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS: CORREA BACKS DOWN, OFFICIAL RESULTS OUT
SOON

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ecuador's electoral authorities told the press on October 17 that they expect final official presidential results no later than October 22 and possibly by the 19th, to be followed Congressional and other results by October 25, at the latest. Current official tabulations of 60% of the votes show Noboa ahead by a slim margin, and reflect reporting from smaller provinces; we expect Noboa's margin over Correa to grow with results from the larger coastal provinces. Correa continues to allege fraud, but has called on his supporters to "turn the page" on the first round and focus on winning in the second round. Prospects for serious post-electoral conflict diminished as election officials and independent observers helped manage expectations and reassured the public their votes would not be lost or manipulated. End Summary.

Results coming in

¶2. (U) The current official count finally became available to the public on the TSE website, www.tse.gov.ec, on October 17. With 59.9% of the count complete, official results as of the writing of this report are as follows:

Noboa - 25.31%
Correa - 24.58%
Gutierrez - 16.08%
Roldos - 15.77%
Viteri - 9.45%

Correa Calls off Protests

¶3. (SBU) The Correa concession signal came from Gustavo Larrea, chief political advisor, who publicly called on Correa's supporters to "turn the page" on the first round results, and "face with dignity the second round" challenge. "This does not signify forgetting about fraud, we must be vigilant, but our supporters need to return to campaign in all provinces." A street demonstration against E-Vote at TSE headquarters organized by rabble-rousing radio station La Luna fizzled on October 16, attracting only 400.

Officials Begin Managing Expectations

¶4. (SBU) After a day of speculation after the TSE-contracted quick count failed, provincial election authorities proceeded

in the manual tabulation of election booth results. TSE President Xavier Cazar told the public that final results of the presidential race could be expected between October 19-22. Congressional and other results would follow by October 25, within the legally mandated 10-day post-election period. He noted that the TSE's unofficial results corresponded to those collected in quick counts administered by the OAS and the local election watchdog NGO, Citizen Participation. The TSE website began reporting the initial results sent in by the more efficient provincial election boards, generally more complete for smaller provinces, on October 17.

¶5. (SBU) On October 17, OAS Chief of Mission Rafael Bielsa held a press conference to issue a report describing OAS observation of the election process and calling on the TSE to speed up its manual count and maximize transparency. Bielsa assured the public that the official vote count was proceeding apace, under the scrutiny of political parties to detect and prevent fraud. The OAS is not aware of any evidence of fraud affecting results. The voting on October 15 proceeded normally, with a few regrettable incidents in isolated areas which did not alter national results.

¶6. (SBU) Bielsa said the OAS observation mission would continue to follow the official vote count process closely. He denied any personal political bias and acknowledged that he knew Santiago Murray, the head of the discredited E-Vote, who had past OAS observer experience. He emphasized that the OAS had no relationship with E-Vote and had strongly cautioned the TSE in writing about problems associated with E-Vote's methodology.

Comment

¶7. (SBU) Correa's statement on October 17 should help calm the waters here. Gutierrez supporters are also disgruntled, and privately believe the quick count was aborted because Gutierrez' rise began to challenge Correa for second place. Though far-fetched, this line of speculation illustrates Gutierrez camp paranoia. Both Correa and Noboa are signaling openness to other political Factions and their voters, if not actual alliances, which have negative connotations here. Lucio Gutierrez publicly issued a set of demands in exchange for his support in the second round--they consist of punitive actions against individuals who contributed to his destitution.

¶8. (SBU) After initial post-electoral paralysis, election authorities are getting their act together and focusing on informing the public. Unjustified attacks continue to dog Bielsa, however. The TSE's black eye with the quick vote and the aspersions about Bielsa's impartiality create a challenging environment for November 26 if the vote is close. We will privately encourage the TSE develop their game plan and effectively manage expectations for the next round.
JEWELL